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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000586

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[1](#)B. 09 ANTANANARIVO 570

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Classified By: POLOFF JEFFREY HULSE FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Madagascar's "Big Four" political leaders are entering their second day of talks in Maputo, Mozambique (reftel B), under the tutelage of former Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano. After a "satisfying" (but ceremonial) first encounter on the evening of August 5, the leaders were tasked today with outlining their individual visions of a political solution, in hopes of finding common ground by Sunday at the latest. Civil society groups have characterized this as a high-stakes last-ditch effort to save the country, while former President Marc Ravalomanana's supporters in particular have been clear that the Big Four will be judged either "patriots, or enemies of the nation" on the results of these talks. The military leadership has already declared that Ravalomanana cannot return to power, and that the transition government will not recognize any solution "imposed" on HAT President Andry Rajoelina during the talks. HAT Prime Minister Roindefo Monja has also stated that he'll remain in his position, regardless of what's decided in Maputo, further narrowing Rajoelina's room for maneuver. It is unlikely that the four parties will actually reach a comprehensive agreement at this juncture, but the fact that they have all shown up, and are engaging in talks at all, is a step in the right direction. END SUMMARY.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS IN MAPUTO

[1](#)2. (C) The four groups arrived in Mozambique on August 5, and the leaders had an introductory two-hour meeting that evening behind closed doors. This is the first time the Big Four have met at the same time, due to former President Didier Ratsiraka's ongoing residence in France, and Ravalomanana's current exile in South Africa. All four made public statements before the meeting expressing optimism about the proceedings, although Rajoelina and Ravalomanana were already making not-so-subtle references to what will likely be key sticking points: Ravalomanana expressed his opinion that he remains the legitimate president of Madagascar, while Rajoelina made clear that the fundamental legality of his transition government was not up for debate. Albert Zafy remains focused on the need for "national reconciliation", whatever else they decide on; Ratsiraka's spokesperson limited himself to optimism about the meeting, without laying out any priorities.

[1](#)3. (C) Those left behind in Madagascar are not idly waiting for word from Maputo, and are doing their best to frame the conversation from afar. On August 3, a group of 12 civil

society organizations held a press conference to insist that the four leaders sign an inclusive agreement to "manage the transition in a consensual manner", and threatened unspecified "measures" in case of failure. (NOTE: This is a toothless threat, but their show of unity is a rare moment of collaboration for the civil society sector. END NOTE) Adding to fears of unrest within the HAT, the Minister of Defense and the leadership of the Army, National Police, and Gendarmerie stirred the pot on August 4 by declaring categorically that Ravalomanana cannot return to power, and that the transition government will not be obliged to recognize any solution imposed on Rajoelina during the talks that "does not conform with the superior interests of the nation". Likewise, PM Monja stated in an interview on August 4 that he would remain in his job, "whatever is decided in Maputo". The delegates have been tight-lipped going into day two of talks, with Ravalomanana continuing to express optimism but deferring to the mediators for public commentary. Chissano stated to the press that the delegations today would outline their positions in detail during today's meetings, scheduled to begin at 10am local time.

SHOWING UP IS HALF THE BATTLE

14. (C) COMMENT: While civil society and media outlets are painting this as a last-ditch effort, it is unlikely that the four parties will actually reach the comprehensive agreement they seek - but they may be able to take a few important steps forward. Ravalomanana will be seeking a deal on amnesty and his right to return, and a role for himself or his delegates in the transition government. Rajoelina will attempt to retain the status quo to the greatest extent possible, knowing that his PM and military will be loath to accept compromise. If these two can bridge that gap and

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reach some sort of agreement, Ratsiraka and Zafy will likely be unable to block it, allowing the discussion to progress beyond amnesty deals towards the far more important issues of governance during the transition, organization of elections, and finding a way to stop the continuing abuses of human rights perpetrated by an increasingly fragmented transition government. END COMMENT.
STROMAYER